

### Orchids of Cuba

JUAN LLAMACHO (text) and JULIO A. LARRAMENDI (photographs). 2005. **The Orchids of Cuba—Las Orquideas de Cuba**. (Cloth. ISBN 84-933615-2-6, hbk.). Greta Editores, Plaza Mayor, 24 25340 VERDÚ, SPAIN. (Orders: +34 690 733 011, <http://www.gretaeditores.com> info@gretaeditores.com). 49.00 Euros [\$58.19 2/13/06], 287 pp., Spanish-English in parallel columns, color photographs, interpretive graphics, table of species, and glossary, 9.6" × 7".

Following a recent trend for regional orchid books to be both scientifically accurate and written in such a manner that they are popular with the non-academic enthusiast, *The Orchids of Cuba* fulfills a geographic niche that has long been void. This work of two enthusiastic Cubans has produced not only the first full-color book on the orchids of the island archipelago but the first text in English (Spanish/English in parallel columns) that provides an alluring enticement to the island nation. Following an imprimatur by Carlyle A. Luer, M.D. and foreword by James Ackerman, Ph.D. the book starts with the basic biology of orchids and biogeography of Cuba and proceeds to merge the two, describing and illustrating the several regions of the nation. These regions and the orchids found within them are then treated in detail. Of the 305 species documented from Cuba at the writing of the book, more than 150 are treated in detail and, for the most part, have excellent color photographs. Both the author's and photographer's love of the pleurothallids (*Lepanthes* and related genera) is evident in the spectacular close-up photographs of many of these tiny species. Following the species treatments is a section on undescribed (those species that have not yet been identified and/or described to science) species, with the same high-quality photographs. The book concludes with a table of all 305 species currently found in Cuba, their flowering times and biogeographic distribution, a brief bibliography, and an excellent glossary. What is unfortunately lacking is an index. Because of the arrangement of species it makes it difficult to find specific information quickly. A listing of synonyms for the species treated in full would also have been helpful. No keys to identification are given as this book is, hopefully, just the prelude to more publications covering all of the orchids of Cuba.

From the reviewer's standpoint *The Orchids of Cuba* has the same problem as most other works that treat orchids from the Caribbean and Central America/Mexico. When ranges are stated the occurrence of the species in the United States, usually Florida, is omitted. In part, this appears to be perpetuated error, as the same omissions occur in several works. Rather than relying on publications from a quarter century or more ago, simply consulting *Flora of North America* or *Wild Orchids of Florida* would have solved this problem. Those species included in this work and also documented from Florida include *Lonopsis utricularioides*, *Prosthechea boothiana*, *Sacoila lanceolata*, *Bulbophyllum pachyrachis*, *Epidendrum nocturnum*, *Liparis nervosa*, *Maxillaria crassifolia*, *Brassia caudata*, *Eulophia elata*, *Malaxis spicata*, *Habenaria distans*, *Phaius tankervilleae*, *Vanilla planifolia*, *Epidendrum radicans*, *Prescottia opligantha*, and *Pelexia adnata*. *Govenia utriculata* is erroneously attributed to Florida (*Govenia floridana* is the correct species). From a taxonomic standpoint little issue can be taken other than to note that the treatment and photographs of *Habenaria quinqueseta* are actually *H. macroceratitis* (syn. *H. quinqueseta* var. *macroceratitis*), and the curious treatment of *Sacoila lanceolata* and *Stenorrhynchos squamulosum*. The latter two both should be treated as *Sacoila* as the most obvious difference between *Sacoila* and *Stenorrhynchos* being the presence (in the former) or absence of a mentum (in the latter).

The English translation is excellent and very readable and the only error noted would be the incomplete name, or omission of a period after the abbreviation, in one of the authors' names: Gal for Galeotti. The book is printed on very high-quality, heavy paper and durably bound. It is to be highly recommended to all interested in the orchids of the Caribbean and south Florida as well.—Paul Mar-

tin Brown, author, *Wild Orchids of Florida, The Wild Orchids of North America, Wild Orchids of the Southeastern United States*, 10896 SW 90<sup>th</sup> Terrace, Ocala, FL 34481, U.S.A., naorchid@aol.com.

### Splendor in the Hill Country Grass

BRIAN and SHIRLEY LOFLIN. 2006. **Grasses of the Texas Hill Country**. 2006. (ISBN 1-58544-467-7, flexbound with flaps). Texas A&M University Press, 4354 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-4354, U.S.A. (**Orders:** 979-458-3982, 979-847-8752 fax; <http://www.tamu.edu/upress/>). \$23.00, 208 pp., 170 color photos, 7 lin art, 2 maps, black and white figures, glossary, bibliography, index, 5 3/4" × 8 1/2".

*Grasses of the Texas Hill Country* is a pictorial guide to grasses of the Hill Country region of Texas. Designed for the layperson, this book is full of crisp color photographs on a black background that clearly show the inflorescences (seed heads) of grasses common in the Hill Country as well as many other areas of Texas. Authors Brian and Shirley Loflin have created a guide that is easy to use with grasses grouped by similarities in inflorescence structure. The front and back book flaps serve as handy reference guides for inflorescence structure types and the icons used throughout the text.

The opening chapter of the book introduces readers to the Hill Country region and other vegetation regions of Texas. The introduction discusses the basic structures of grass and includes color images. Within the "how to use this book" section is a detailed explanation of the different inflorescence structure types used to organize the grasses in the book. This introductory section includes other items of interest such as a discussion on how plants are given scientific names, the meaning of those names, and a list of both the genus and common names of grasses included in this book.

There are seventy-seven grasses included in the book. Each grass has an associated profile that includes features of the species, plant uses, growing season information, and habitat information including soil, location and distribution. The features section of each profile includes important information such as typical height, description of grass inflorescence, some vegetation characteristics, whether the grass is cool or warm season, native or introduced and whether the grass is annual or perennial. Much of the feature information is included in a bar under the common name of the grass in a rather intuitive icon form. The economic usage sections describe a species' use as a forage grass, garden grass, landscape grass, or value to wildlife. Each grass profile has at least one large image of the inflorescence and many grasses have additional small inset photographs of growth habit in nature.

There are a few items that would have made this book more useful to both beginners and more experienced grass enthusiasts. There are fantastic photographs of the inflorescences included with each grass, but unfortunately the authors did not include photographs of the vegetative structures (ligule and auricle) needed to help identify grasses when the inflorescence is not available. However, the authors have included some vegetative structure information within the "features" of the plant description. It would have also been beneficial to have the growth habit photographs that accompany many of the plant descriptions for every grass included in the text. There were a couple of typos/mix-ups noticed; an example is the diagrammed photograph in Figure 5 where the auricle was incorrectly labeled as the ligule. Some other small typos were noticed. Despite these few items, there is no doubt that this is a very useable book for persons with an interest in learning grasses of the Hill Country area.

If you are a beginner to grass identification or are looking for a good color photograph guide to grasses for the Hill Country (and surrounding area) of Texas, *Grasses of the Texas Hill Country* by Brian and Shirley Loflin would be a terrific book to start with. The glossary, writing style and icon quick guide add to making this pictorial book an easy to reference and use. This book is easily recommended for use by young adults and general grass or plant identification enthusiasts.—Lee Luckeydoo, Herbarium, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.